

if they are unable to do so—some opportunities available, and I will explore all options. But I am concerned about it and so should America.

Africa

Q. Mr. President, it's now clear that the continent of Africa, particularly sub-Saharan Africa, is very important to you. Colin Powell mentioned that over the weekend. But what's unclear are the priorities in sub-Saharan Africa. We understand that there is a problem with AIDS, and they're a mineral-rich country. What are your priorities for Africa?

The President. You bet. Well, the priorities have got to be the same priorities we have for our own hemisphere, for example, or for around the world: freedom, democracy, opportunity through open markets. And so the first place to start on the economic front is to make sure we have free and fair trade with the African Continent. There ought to be significant trade back and forth, and we ought to explore opportunities to do so. If there are barriers—and some are worried about the textile industry barriers, for example—we need to examine them all, and I will instruct Robert Zoellick to do just that.

In terms of having a peaceful continent, it is very important for us to work with countries like Nigeria—to enable Nigeria to have an effective peacekeeping force, to keep warring parties apart on that continent. It's also important for us not to ignore Africa, so that we can anticipate problems before they occur. Oftentimes on that important continent, things get out of hand, and they could have been prevented in the first place, which means to have the Secretary of State and the National Security Adviser pay attention to Africa, which we will do.

Q. Are you possibly thinking of going back—going to Africa?

The President. Well, I'm—one country at a time. [*Laughter*] I'm going to Mexico first. I've got a lot of work to do at home.

Gregory—David Gregory brought up a very important issue. It reminds me about how—it should remind you about how involved I'm going to be on pieces of legislation, whether it be patients' bill of rights or tax relief or education reform. I've got a lot of work to do here—to work with the Congress, to make sure that the principles that I think are important are inherent in these different pieces of legislation. I'll be making some trips, but I'm not exactly sure when I would be going to Africa, for example.

Tax Relief Legislation

Q. Mr. President, what is it you think you're going to need to do to get enough Democratic support for your tax cut plan?

The President. Say that again now?

Q. What are you going to have to do to ensure that you get enough Democratic support for your tax cut plan to make sure that it gets down to your desk for a signature?

The President. Well, I appreciate that. The thing I'm going to need to do is to remind Democrats, one, our budget works—that you can set aside payroll taxes for Social Security, set clear priorities, pay down debt, and there's room for the \$1.6 trillion tax cut. It started off at 1.3, and evidently it's grown to 1.6.

Secondly, to remind people in Congress that this tax relief package is fair and positively affects the lives of people who are standing up here by me. It is a positive effect on our economy.

Thirdly, remind them, we'd better act. The economy is slowing down, and we need to act and act as quickly as we possibly can, including working with Congress to make sure the tax cuts can take—as much of the tax cuts as possible can take immediate effect to help people.

Q. If I could follow up, do you favor doing something retroactively, or would you simply accelerate the benefits in the first year of your plan?